

President's News Conference on Foreign and Domestic Matters

Following is a transcript of President Reagan's news conference last night in Washington, as recorded by The New York Times.

OPENING STATEMENT

I have a short statement to make before we get to your questions. I want to assure that you do have some questions. I would especially like to speak to our citizens who are concerned about unemployment. One of the most discouraging things about the recent recession was its duration. The figures show that industrial production leveled out in '79 and has generally declined since then, but there was encouraging news, as you all know, today.

Industrial production was up nine-tenths of 1 percent in January, with autos and steel up sharply, and this upturn has been supported by other favorable economic signals in recent weeks, including today's report that January housing starts are up 36 percent over the previous month, to the highest monthly level since 1979.

As a result of the economic program we already have, already in place, the recovery is beginning to flex its muscles. But far too many Americans are still unemployed. The question still before us is how to ease the burden on the jobless without price inflation, the long-term recovery, and with this balance in mind, I recently instructed the Office of Management and Budget to see what we could do to increase employment by providing more relief in the short term. But I told them not to bring me just another package of tax cuts.

Compromise on Jobs
Since then, we've been working toward a bipartisan compromise on jobs and humanitarian aid, and I hope that in the next several days we can reach an agreement with the Congress so that a bill can be on my desk in March.

Now, the bipartisan compromise has three basic elements: First, it would provide \$4 billion in accelerated expenditures for needed Federal construction and repair projects. These projects, directly and indirectly, could provide as many as 470,000 jobs. Second, we would provide \$1 billion to fund the supplementary employment insurance — or unemployment insurance. I should say the program through the end of the year. And, third, we're seeking \$300 million in additional humanitarian relief for those who are in serious distress.

Contrary to previous plans, this one is consistent with our basic long-term recovery program and meets personal preference — or, in principle, it funds no make-work jobs; instead, we're spending on projects that are already planned and needed. This approach also will have minimum net impact on the budget deficit over the next three years, since it accelerates money that we were already going to pay out — spending somewhat more now but less later. And the humanitarian relief is a one-time finding, funding, not the creation of some new, continuing program.

In a week's while, I will also send to the Congress my proposals for reducing long-term structural unemployment. These will include tax incentives for businesses that hire unemployed, incentives for summer youth employment and funds to retrain displaced workers. I hope the Congress will swiftly enact this second package as well. And together, I believe we can get the economy back to work over both the short-term and the long.



President Reagan preparing notes for his news conference held last night.

'talking that we've even been able to hold with the Soviet Union and they're engaged in those talks right now. I believe I had a right to ask for my choice of what I thought could be of help to me in that.

compromise through if these, for instance, representing Federal employees do make the agreement successfully to Congress that Federal employees will be able to get a retirement system would go bankrupt if you started including Federal employees under a Social Security — do you have a plan of what you will do if you have no success with your compromise?

A. Well, first of all I am confident that we are going to have an acceptable compromise of think to be a legitimate part of the compromise. Government employees who are presently covered by their own pension plan will be covered by Social Security instead of a Government pension plan.

But I think it'll behoove them when this is a compulsory program for all the rest of the people in the country that they should somehow be exempt from this program. Then where do we start drawing the line. So I think it is a legitimate part of the compromise to include them. And since the program — the present benefit program for pension plan for Government employees is funded in part by employee contributions, but the balance is covered just simply out of general tax funds, general spending, why I don't see where they can say there is any threat to the existing program for existing employees — the newcomers then being covered by Social Security.

Dispute on Nominee
Q. Mr. President, back on your arms control director's nomination, Kenneth Adelman. He was quoted today in the Senate Foreign Relations Committee hearing as having said that arms talks are a sham that we have to play out to keep the American people and our allies happy. Now, with that kind of statement on the record from him, and the fact that he doesn't have any practical experience in arms control negotiations, are you not handing the United States a propaganda advantage in that propaganda war in Europe by presenting this man as our lead man on arms control?

A. I believe so. And I don't, I know that he is aware of what it is that we're proposing and what he's trying to do. And it isn't, it isn't that I think that we're at the lowest as anyone can be in trying to promote this. And I think he can be helpful in that.

Head of Federal Reserve
Q. Mr. President, I'd like to ask you about another important appointment you're going to have to make Volcker, the Federal Reserve chairman, expires in a few months and what I'm wondering is what are the qualifications that you're looking for in a new Fed chairman and would you consider reappointing Mr. Volcker to that job?

A. Well, you've asked that I can't answer because I just don't know in talking about possible appointments in advance. I'll just have to wait until the time comes. I just don't discuss those. Lou?

Rumor on Awacs
Q. Mr. President, there's a report tonight that we have sent Awacs to the Persian Gulf. Is that true or not? I want to ask you, do you fear that there's going to be a Syrian attack on Egypt or could we explain why we've sent these actions that we apparently have taken?

A. Well, I don't believe that there's been any final movement of any kind, and we're well aware of Libya's attempts to destabilize its neighbors and other countries there in that part of the world. But the Awacs — this is not an unusual happening. We have conducted joint exercises and training exercises with the Egyptian Air Force one last year, we'll do more in the future, and these planes have been there for quite some time in Egypt, the Awacs planes, for this kind of an exercise, and that's what they're going to conduct.

Q. I'd like to follow up, sir. You don't see then any unusual or particular threat from Libya toward Egypt or its neighbor? At this moment, beyond the general attitude Libyans have had?

A. Well, as I've said to you, we're well aware of their propensity for doing things like that so we wouldn't be surprised. But this is an exercise that we've done before, are going to do again, and are going to do it now. And, as I say, there's been no naval movement at all. Sam?

Q. Sir, I'd like to follow up with Lou's question. We understand that the threat may be from Qaddafi to the Sudan. I take it if we do have naval forces there, and that, but no, we don't have any forces in that area that would be involved.

A. I don't think there's any occasion for that; it's never been contemplated. But we've known that Sudan is one of the neighboring states that has been threatened with destabilizing and so forth. Just as he has with Chad. That's all I can say about that. But no, we don't have any forces in that area that would be involved.

Q. Well, sir, the question arises because you remember very well in 1981, we shot down two of Qaddafi's aircraft that we said were challenging us in the Gulf of Sidra. I take it if we do have naval forces there, and that, but no, we don't have any forces in that area that would be involved.

A. Well, this was an exercise that is held annually by our Navy, and part of the force we've deployed narrowly in the Gulf of Sidra, which he had tried to claim were international waters, or was not international waters, I'm sorry, was his waters. This is as if we ran a line from the Texas border over to the tip of Florida and said the Gulf of Mexico is American waters, nobody else can get in.

But in that instance, it was just very curious; they sent out planes and they shot missiles at two of our airplanes that were up there, and two of our airplanes turned around and shot missiles at them. We were just better shots than they were.

Q. Would you do that again, if necessary?

A. I think that any time that our forces, wherever we have put them, are fired upon, I have no doubt we've got a right to defend themselves, yes.

Crime and Gun Control
Q. To another very difficult problem, Mr. President, crime. You are aware, I am sure, that the United States has an utterly disgraceful number of murders. Do you believe that there is any correlation between the wide dissemination of guns in this country and this disgraceful record?

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cause I think this is too great an opportunity to finally bring peace to the Middle East for us to let this go by. And I would like, as I say, I think it would be well worth the price to have them there. It doesn't mean that there is a very much different than it is today. It's to be a stabilizing force while Libya recovers from this long period of warlords with their own armies and so forth and establishes its sovereignty over its own borders.

Q. I'd like to follow up. You seem to be indicating that you have decided. Have you proposed it, is it part of the plan that Mr. Habib has taken?

A. No. This is just, as I've said, that if this should become a factor and this could be the key element in resolving this situation, this depulso of forces from Lebanon, then yes, I would be willing to be going along with this.

Election in West Germany
Q. Mr. President, as you know, there's an election approaching in West Germany. And the latest polls appear to give the opposition a prospect of winning these elections in March. My question to you is, what do you think the consequences would be for the Western Alliance if a new German Government took office and declined to deploy the Pershing missiles?

A. I think it would be a terrible setback to the cause of peace and disarmament.

So far, I've had no indication that that would be a possibility. Herr Vogel has been here in this country. He indicated support of what it is that we're proposing in the arms reduction talks. And he seemed to indicate his knowledge of how important our continued plan to deploy — remember, at their request — those missiles would be in securing this reduction in armaments.

So, we're not going to inject ourselves into anyone else's internal affairs or elections at all, but I believe that the Vice President's trip there would be a great support all over Europe, for what it is we're doing. And in Germany even from the fact that there is — they're preparing for an election.

Q. So you think the deployment question will not turn on the West German elections then?

A. No, I don't. I don't really believe that. When I said it would be terrible, I did not mean that to infer as to — that someone else might win an election. I meant it would be terrible if any of our allies withdrew from their present position of support for this.

Conservative Critics
Q. Mr. President, a number of conservative leaders here at home have grumbled recently that you are being swayed by aides who don't share your ideology. What is your reaction both to the suggestion that aides are taking over and to the suggestion that you are, and, secondly, to the slogan used by at least one of your members of the Cabinet: "Let Reagan be Reagan?"

A. Well, I'll tell you, I read those things, too, and I get pretty frustrated. Because, maybe I'm getting to have an exhibit on how I was elected. I see some of those unnamed aides up and see if they can push me off the platform. I'm not sure, I'm not sure, I'm being given what I have asked for, which is every option, every shade of thinking on issues, and then I make the decision. There's no one pushing me, and I'm beginning to think that those aides are taking over. I think that's what they're saying something — they say, "I've never met them," as yet.

Missiles in Europe
Q. Mr. President, back to the missiles in Europe. The message that Vice President Bush seemed to bring back and that we hear from on television last night was that they do support your zero option proposal but that it has gotten nowhere that they would very much like the consideration of a so-called interim move toward less progress. Coming out of your spokesmen, I mean, over the last three days seems to be a very hard line against that, and I wonder don't you think that it is making it more politically difficult for the NATO leaders to support your zero option proposal?

A. No, what he came back with was support expressed for our zero option, and what he also did — there's no question that they wanted to know whether we're going to be willing to talk other issues and he pointed out to them my original statement, and that has been our position. If somebody wants to present an offer, we'll negotiate in good faith with it.

Q. Let me follow up. Since your zero option, Mr. Andropov, acting as a counterproposal has been rejected, doesn't that leave a lot of NATO leaders feeling like the ball should be in your court if there is going to be any move?

A. No, I said a reasonable proposal — let me discuss with three or four of each one — we're up to the neighborhood of five missiles and yet we would still be zero. We would not have any deterrent force on our side. That does not sound to me like a reasonable proposal. Now I think the ball is still in their court.

Prospect of New Taxes
Q. Mr. President — I've been given a preview.

A. You hear one.

Q. I think I do. It's pretty clear, based on what people on the Hill in both parties are saying, that there's not much sentiment for your idea of contingency taxes to kick in if the deficit is still going to be high several years down the road. So what's your alternate solution, and are there any circumstances under which you'd drop the indexing?

A. No, and I would have to explain why. At the rate we're reducing inflation now, indexing as a tax measure is not going to be very attractive. So, one, whether they have it or not, with regard to the amount of money that they're going to be paid. So they're going to be paid.

Continued on Following Page

QUESTIONS AND ANSWERS

E.P.A.-Congress Dispute

Q. Mr. President, in the controversy over the Environmental Protection Agency there have been suggestions of protection of private interests, of mismanagement, of manipulation, all of this creating the impression of an agency in chaos with business. What's the proper relationship between the E.P.A. business and the rest of the nation? Is the agency living up to your standards? Do you have complete confidence in its director?

A. Certainly do. And I think that the splendid record that has been accomplished by E.P.A. in these last two years is being overlooked in the flurry of accusations that have been made now.

First of all, as we know, about a year before the Superfund bill was passed, there was a billion 000 million dollars of Government money to help in the locating and cleaning up of chemical dumps, or waste dumps, that were, have taken place over the years. And so this particular fund is to provide money, there is no one else that can be held responsible for some of these dumps, for Government to fund clearing them up.

But the law also provides for E.P.A. to bring suit to make out-of-court settlements to try and make those responsible where they can be located, to fund or help fund in these cleanups. So far, we have named \$1.8 billion in the country. There must be thousands and they've named some as high priority, and because of the risk associated with them.

Now, there have been 23 settlements so far that I know of. There's been one criminal conviction.

Use of Superfund
Q. I have to tell you that I believe that the relationship is what it should be — working together with the Congress that are involved in these cleanups. And where there is responsibility, get the private sector paying for it.

So far we've used up about \$20 million of the Superfund, but they've also gotten about somewhere in the neighborhood of another \$10 million from private concerns in these cleanups.

Now, let me point out one thing, because this ties in with the whole matter of whether the executive privilege that was invoked over something less than 100 documents has played some part in this going on now.

We made available to the Congress some 800,000 documents, and less than 100 were held out as actually being involved in cases and litigation, cases that involved cleanup and private concerns. And traditionally that makes them eligible for executive privilege, because it would be disastrous to law enforcement, to our ability to clean up the cleanup of these places if some of the information in these investigative reports was made public.

However, we offered to the Congressional committees that they could come and go over these reports themselves to make sure that they were what we said they were and they're refused. But with this thing that has been suggested that there might be wrongdoing, we will never invoke executive privilege to cover up wrongdoing.

Inquiry by Justice Dept.
And so I have ordered complete investigation by the Justice Department into every charge that is made. I hope we're not getting back to the place where accusation is once again going to be taken as proof of guilt.

And we have been negotiating, because judges that have been called in today on the executive privilege idea, he really ruled that we and Congress had not done enough to seek a compromise and to get together.

So all afternoon, we've been up on the Hill working with the Congress to work some compromise out. Maybe we could meet this problem. Because I can no longer insist on executive privilege if there's a suspicion in the minds of the people that maybe it is

being used to cover some wrongdoing.

Q. As far as the suggestions, though, of mismanagement of the Superfund and manipulation, you seem to be saying you don't buy that.

A. This is what I've told the Department of Justice to look into on all of these. I have been confident of the management by Anne Gorsuch of the department, and we are talking about getting someone to be help and to counsel with regard to the Congressional relationships in the future so that she can devote her time to managing the agency.

Action on Jobs Bill
Q. Mr. President, Congressman Foley praised you today for changing your mind on the Superfund bill, and he said that means that you finally recognize the harsh realities of the session. My question to you, sir, is would you be willing to get a compromise and are you willing to go for an extra billion or so — last I should say — to provide money for concerns in terms of summer jobs, nutrition for women and children and energy assistance?

A. Well, I didn't have to change my mind. I've been well aware of the harsh realities. In fact, I lived through them in the last year. I was aware of that time. What we have done is simply, as we've said in our budget submitted for '84 and looking toward '85, was a number of requests that we put in funding for repair for much of this. It's a reconstruction of various agencies and departments. And what we are working on is simply moving them up into the '85 and simply moving them up into the '85, which I would have to ask for a supplemental appropriation to do them in '85. But we are working on that for that money in the '84 and '85 budgets.

New Funds for Proposal
So this is what we're doing for the bulk of this. There's no question in our proposal also, and for some of the very things you just mentioned. We've been working with the leadership on this. I think I can say up there, and I think I can say we're agreed right down to every last comma and period, but they have been most receptive to it, and I am hopeful that we're going to be able to have a bipartisan bill that will be a proposal.

Now the difference between this and the type of thing I threatened to veto was that this was about a \$3.5 billion program but which was new funding. \$3.5 billion of new funds, and creating what were make-work jobs out in various levels of the public sector.

Q. What about the add-ons?

A. Well, as I say, wait till you see the second package that we're coming up with. We'll be providing for all of these are covered. For example, you mention nutrition. Well, right now in our budget we're providing for a 12 percent increase in the people that are eligible for the nutritional programs over what they knew in 1980.

Nominee for Arms Post
Q. Mr. President, the Senate Foreign Relations Committee today held off your nomination of Kenneth Adelman as arms control director, and several senators asked that you withdraw his nomination. Will you?

A. No, I believe the young man is eminently qualified for this. All of his experience indicates it. He is well educated, he is a very intelligent man, his experience with Jean Kirkpatrick at the United Nations and all — and I don't believe that they, in delaying their vote, are doing anything to help us in our efforts to get an arms reduction agreement. I look forward to having him doing this and I have to disagree with those who — first of all, arms reduction should not be a political problem on the Hill. It's too serious and we're too concerned about it. And frankly, I feel that since it's the one who took the lead to begin bringing about the first real arms reduction

Agriculture Dept. Hiring

Q. Mr. President, a memo was drafted recently by the Director of the Office of Minority Affairs in the Agriculture Department, Isadore Rodriguez. It was for Secretary Block and it was about the hiring of minorities in civil rights regulations. It was rejected by Deputy Assistant Secretary John F. V. What information, if any, do you have about this?

A. Well, I can't give you an answer right now. I don't know what this is, but I certainly look into it. I can't say I'm sure that it's not a bad thing. Are you suggesting that he's, that there was some suggestions about, with regard to employment in the department?

Q. Well, the memo suggests purging some aspects of Title VII of the Civil Rights Act, with regard to underrepresentation. It also mentions that women and other groups haven't supported your department's hiring policies and financially from Agriculture Department events such as Women's Week. Now, given the perception that you have acknowledged that some people have of you, my other question would be why would such a memo come out of the Agriculture Department? Why would it bubble up?

A. Well, it didn't bubble far enough to get to me, and I can only tell you that I will look into it and communicate with Jack Locke right away.

Social Security Problems

Q. Mr. President, Social Security has not gotten that much attention in the last couple of weeks, but there is a mounting campaign against the kind of compromise that you and the Democratic leadership came up with. What will you do if you cannot get a

compromise through if these, for instance, representing Federal employees do make the agreement successfully to Congress that Federal employees will be able to get a retirement system would go bankrupt if you started including Federal employees under a Social Security — do you have a plan of what you will do if you have no success with your compromise?

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Crime and Gun Control

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